



Space contact: Al Hovey, a Shawano middle school teacher, sits in his car today with daughters Carrie and Gwen. His daughters were with him

Thursday when shuttle astronaut John-David Bartoe acknowledged Hovey's signal to the Shuttle Challenger from his ham radio.

Press-Gazette photo by John A. Robb

□ Shuttle

Shuebogan on Saturday. "Heck, I'll try it," Hovey thought, though all he had was a small mobile unit in his car.

So he checked his computer again to find the best times and wrote them down on a small piece of paper, which he folded and put in his pocket.

The radio signal from the ham operators in the Shuttle only can be heard for about seven minutes as it passes overhead about every 90 minutes.

So here was Hovey at the family reunion, running to his car every 90 minutes.

When 8 p.m. came, he pulled out his small piece of paper and saw circles and stars and the word "Best" scrawled over the time.

He was right and lucky enough to pick the right frequency.

At 8:15, he heard Bartoe say "This is WOORE calling earth."

Hovey gave his call signals and Bartoe responded.

Then the signal faded because the Shuttle is traveling at 18,000 mph.

Hovey said that's the first contact with a shuttle from a Wisconsin resident and might be the first from a mobile unit.

His interest in reaching the Shuttle began in 1983 when he tried to reach the Columbia. He follows the space program closely because he teaches science. He listens to all the Shuttle-to-earth transmissions re-broadcast over 14.295 on the ham radio dial.

In 1983, he heard astronauts sending signals, but was never lucky enough to get a response to his call.

This time, he was.

And he hopes to use that to encourage young people to get involved in radio and science, to get excited.

"I didn't relax this weekend," he said.

Shawano man contacts shuttle with ham radio

By Keith Goldschmidt

Of the Press-Gazette

When Al Hovey heard a voice from the heavens Saturday night, he couldn't believe it.

"The car roof just about went off," he said today.

He was sitting in his car about one mile from the Sheboygan County Airport when shuttle astronaut John-David Bartoe acknowledged Hovey's signal to the shuttle.

"WA9BZW, I read you loud and clear," Bartoe said.

Hovey, 42, a Shawano middle school teacher, had just made contact on his ham radio with the Shuttle Challenger as it made a pass over Wisconsin.

Bartoe and Anthony England sent random signals to earth as part of the Shuttle Amateur Radio Experiment, a spokeswoman at Johnson Space Center in Houston said today.

When the astronauts have free time, they signal Earth, she said.

For two days Hovey had been trying diligently to make contact with Challenger. He had turned his ham radio antennas on his home just right. He had plugged information into his home computer so he'd know the best time.

Thursday night, he sat with his two daughters, three former students, three Civil Air Patrol members and a few others trying to contact the Shuttle for about five hours.

They did the same thing Friday.

And then he had to go to a family reunion in

Please see Shuttle/A-2